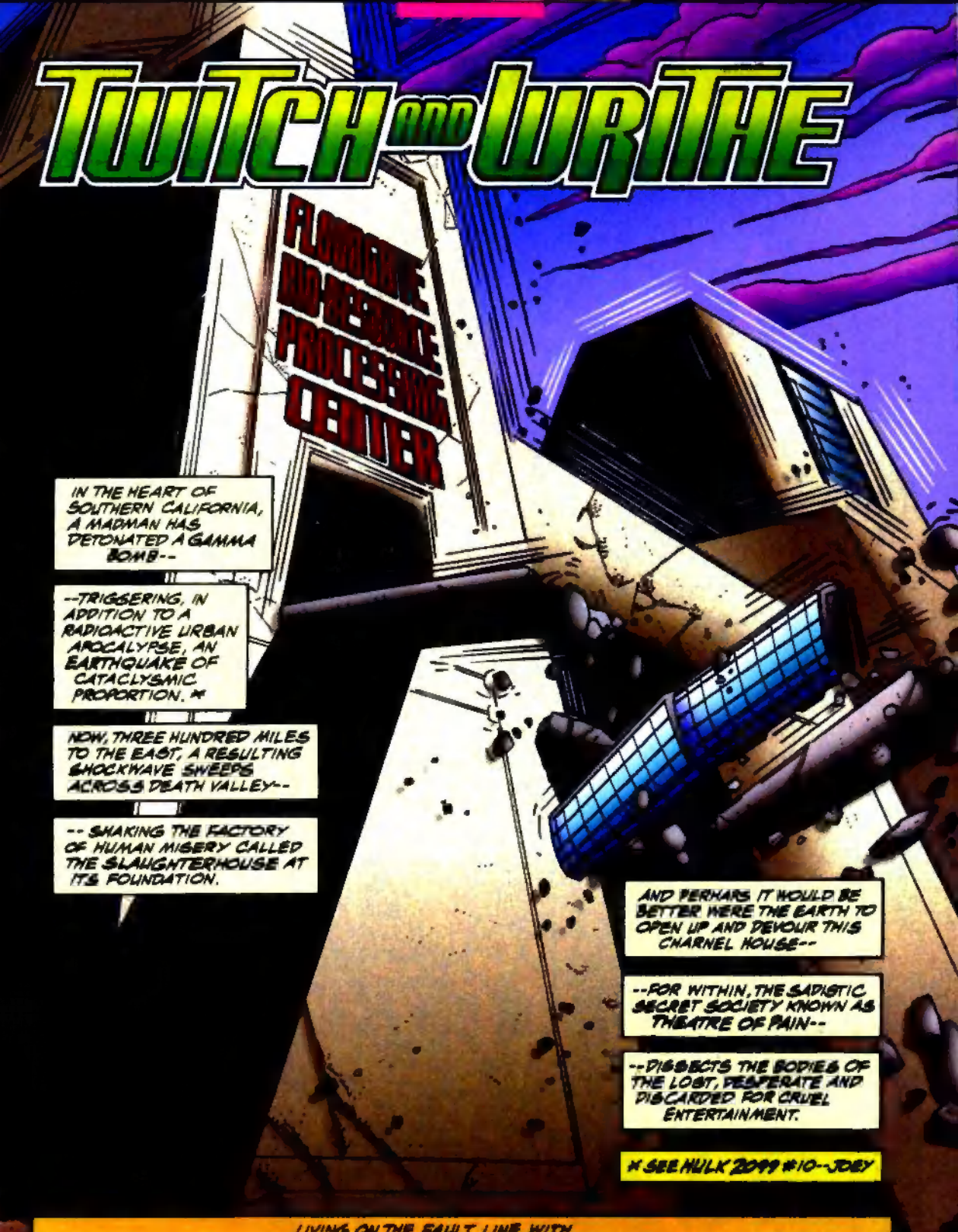
TWITCH AND WRITHE


FLAMBEAU BIO-RESOURCE PROCESSING CENTER
IN THE HEART OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, A MADMAN HAS DETONATED A GAMMA BOMB--
--TRIGGERING, IN ADDITION TO A RADIOACTIVE URBAN APOCALYPSE, AN EARTHQUAKE OF CATACLYSMIC PROPORTION. *
NOW, THREE HUNDRED MILES TO THE EAST, A RESULTING SHOCKWAVE SWEEPS ACROSS DEATH VALLEY--
-- SHAKING THE FACTORY OF HUMAN MISERY CALLED THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE AT ITS FOUNDATION.
AND PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER WERE THE EARTH TO OPEN UP AND DEVOUR THIS CHARNEL HOUSE--
--FOR WITHIN, THE SADISTIC SECRET SOCIETY KNOWN AS THEATRE OF PAIN--
--DISSECTS THE BODIES OF THE LOST, DESPERATE AND DISCARDED FOR CRUEL ENTERTAINMENT.
* SEE HULK 2099 #10--JOEY

LIVING ON THE FAULT LINE WITH

JOHN MOORE WRITER	RON LIM PENCILER	HARRY CANDELARIO & JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKERS	KEN LOPEZ LETTERER	TOM SMITH COLORIST	JOEY CAVALIERI EDITOR	BOBBIE CHASE CHIEF

COMPUTER COLOR BY-- MALIBU

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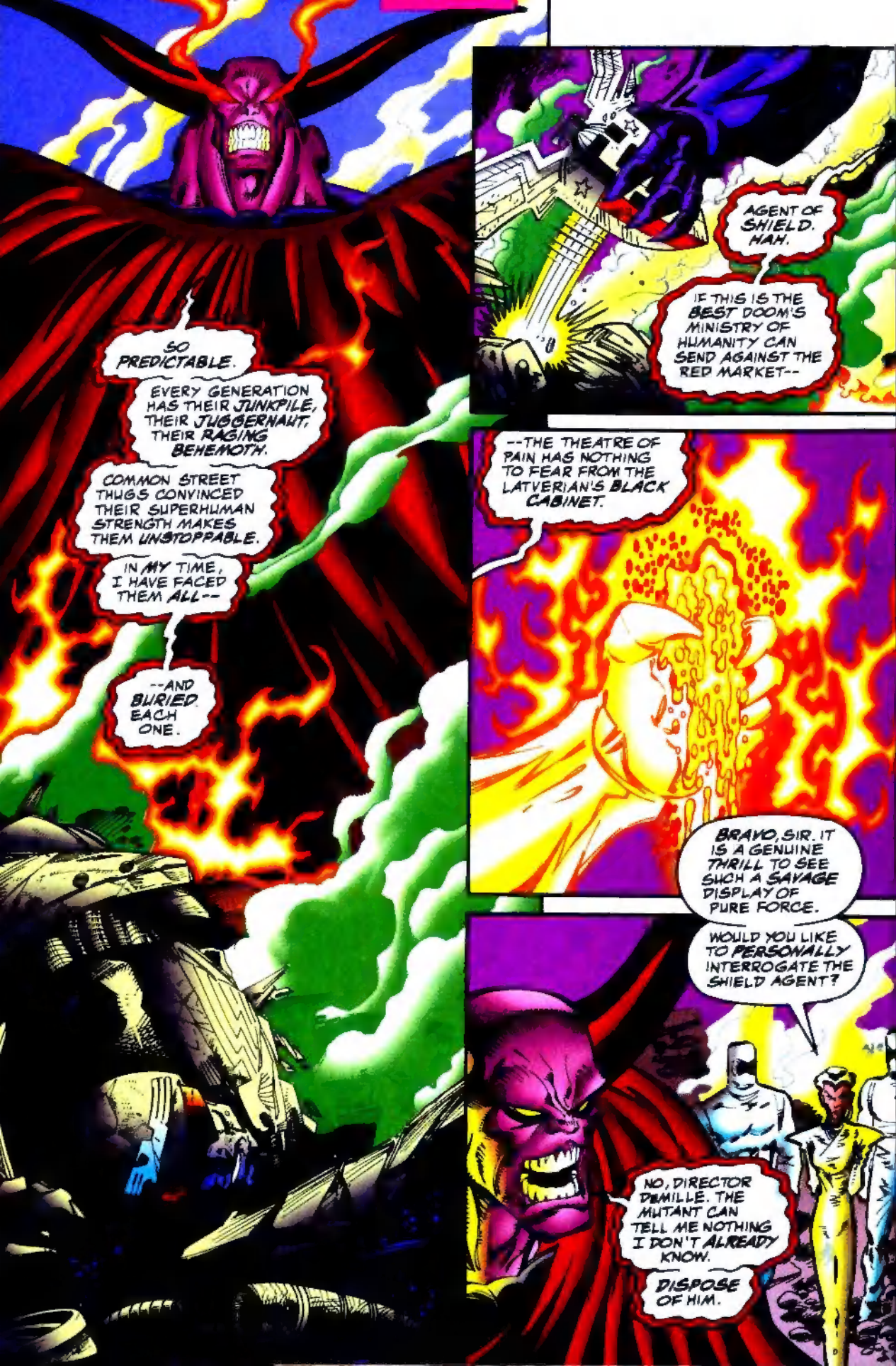
INSIDE.
RRRUMMBLLE
QUIVER, I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED--
--BUT IF YOU KEEP THROWING OFF THIS MUCH VIBRATIONAL ENERGY--
-- THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE GUARDS ARE GONNA FIND US FOR SURE.
IT'S NOT ME, SHAM! I SWEAR!
THEN EITHER THIS JOINT IS GETTING BOMBED OR WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF ONE WAY-OFF-THE-RICHTER-SCALE EARTHQUAKE.
IT STOPPED. FINALLY.
SOME ROLLER COASTER RIDE.
I THOUGHT THE BUILDING WAS GOING TO COLLAPSE ON US.
BETTER THAT THAN GOING BACK TO THOSE TORTURE CHAMBERS THEY CALL LABORATORIES.
WE'RE NEVER GONNA GET OUT OF HERE, ARE WE, SHAM? WE'RE JUST RATS IN A MAZE.
STOP TALKIN' LIKE THAT, QUIV. WE BEEN THROUGH WORSE. AND WE ALWAYS COME OUT THE OTHER SIDE.
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT--
ON THE OTHER HAND...
SPA'
KLANGK


SO PREDICTABLE.
EVERY GENERATION HAS THEIR JUNKPILE, THEIR JUGGERNAUT, THEIR RAGING BEHEMOTH.
COMMON STREET THUGS CONVINCED THEIR SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH MAKES THEM UNSTOPPABLE.
IN MY TIME, I HAVE FACED THEM ALL--
--AND BURIED EACH ONE.
AGENT OF SHIELD. HAH.
IF THIS IS THE BEST DOOM'S MINISTRY OF HUMANITY CAN SEND AGAINST THE RED MARKET--
--THE THEATRE OF PAIN HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE LATVERIAN'S BLACK CABINET.
BRAVO, SIR. IT IS A GENUINE THRILL TO SEE SUCH A SAVAGE DISPLAY OF PURE FORCE.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PERSONALLY INTERROGATE THE SHIELD AGENT?
NO, DIRECTOR DEMILLE. THE MUTANT CAN TELL ME NOTHING I DON'T ALREADY KNOW.
DISPOSE OF HIM.

SUBLEVEL TEN.
OOOOHHH... WAS THAT AN EARTHQUAKE I FELT--
--OR JUST THE AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE ELEPHANT TRANQUILIZERS THEY SHOT US WITH?
I WARNED SHAKTI ABOUT TRYING TO INFILTRATE THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE.*
THE THEATRE GUARDS ITS PROPERTY METICULOUSLY.
*LAST ISSUE--JOEY
BROKEN HAIKU TOLD SHAKTI WE'D FIND XI'AN HERE. WE HAD TO COME.
I STILL SAY XI'AN'S A LOST CAUSE. HE JOINED THE THEATRE OF HIS OWN FREE WILL.
LET'S LOCATE SHAKTI AND GET OUT OF HERE.
BRAKK
NO, WE CAME FOR XI'AN--AND WE'RE NOT LEAVING WITHOUT HIM.
TSK. TSK.
LEAVING SO SOON, LUNA? AND WITHOUT EVEN SAYING HELLO TO YOUR SISTERS.
WE'VE MISSED YOU TERRIBLY YOU KNOW.
IT NEARLY BROKE BLISS'S HEART WHEN SHE'D HEARD YOU LEFT.
WHO ARE THESE THREE?
MEET THE NORNS--EUPHORIA, FELICITY, AND BLISS.
THEY'RE THE MUSES OF THE THEATRE'S BLOODSPORT ARENAS.

I WAS ONE OF THEM FOR TEN LONG YEARS--
--KEPT ON A LEASH BY THE THIRTEENTH CONTROLLER--
--UNTIL OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO BREAK FREE OF THE THEATRE'S CONTROL.
X-MEN 2099 #4. --ME AGAIN.
DON'T GET OVER-CONFIDENT, LOVER.
THE NORNS HAVE BEEN BRED TO BE SAVAGE FIGHTERS.
FINE WITH ME, I'M READY TO ROCK IF THEY--
UH OH...
I'VE LOST MY CHARGE.
THWEK
OF COURSE, LONGHAIR--
--WHILE YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS, MEDTECHS INJECTED YOU WITH A NEURAL INHIBITOR--
--ONE THAT NEGATES YOUR MUTANT ABILITY TO ABSORB AND CHANNEL ENERGY.
EUPHORIA'S DEALT WITH OUR RUNAWAY SISTER'S BOY TOY.
NOW, BLISS, SHOW HER THE ERROR OF HER WANDERING WAYS.
WITH PLEASURE, FELICITY.

SHRAKK
SORRY, BLISS-BABY, THE PLEASURE'S ALL MINE!
MAYBE YOU CAN KOWTOW TO BRIMSTONE LOVE AND THE CONTROLLERS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE--
--BUT I'LL NEVER BE ANYONE'S THRALL AGAIN.
YOU WERE ALWAYS TOO WILLFUL, QUERIDA.
THAT'S WHY THE CONTROLLERS PUT THE RESTRAINING COLLAR ON YOU-- TO KEEP YOU IN LINE.
KRAK
AAGHH!
YOU COULD HAVE HAD IT ALL, LUNA. POWER. LUXURY. WEALTH.
AN UNENDING SUPPLY OF HUMAN CATTLE ON WHOM YOU COULD SATE YOUR VAMPIRIC APPETITE FOR EMOTIONAL TRAUMA.
BUT NO, YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON THE THEATRE FOR THE COMPANY OF THE MUTANT FRINGE.
YOU FORGET THAT I'M A MUTANT, TOO, EUPHORIA.

SO WHY DON'T YOU KILL ME AND HAVE DONE WITH IT?
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO EXPECT A QUICK AND PAINLESS ENDING IN THE THEATRE.
AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO CRUCIFY YOU MYSELF, BRIMSTONE WANTS TO SEE YOU.
TELL BRIMSTONE HE CAN KISS MY-- URGHLL...
SMAK
YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.
I HOPE YOU DIDN'T KILL HER WITH THAT LETHAL CROSS OF YOURS, FELICITY.
BRIMSTONE WON'T BE HAPPY IF WE BRING HIM A CORPSE.
LA LUNÁTICA IS MADE OF STRONGER STUFF THAN THAT.
WE NORNS ARE A HARD LOT TO KILL.
SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH HER MUTIE SQUEEZE?
UNNNGGNHHH...

LATER.
SPLORCH
KAFF... MHUHHK... KAFF... MHUGGGH...
...I'M ALIVE... BUT WHERE AM I?
...AND WHAT IS THAT STENCH?
GREAT... THIS IS ALL I NEED...
I'M HIP-DEEP IN THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE DUMP.
UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, THESE PLACES ARE PERIODICALLY WASHED WITH INDUSTRIAL SOLVENT--
--THAT BREAKS DOWN SOLID REFUSE INTO A MORE MANAGEABLE LIQUID STATE.
GOT TO FIND A WAY OUT BEFORE THE ACID WASH STARTS AND LIQUIFIES ME INTO ONE VISCOUS PROTEIN SHAKE.

RRRRUMBLE
AFTER-SHOCK...
SPLORCH
NOBODY'S MAKING THIS EASY ON ME.
WAIT A SECOND...THE TRASH IN THAT CORNER IS MOVING.
BLORP
BLORP
BLORP
THIS IS NOT ONE OF MY BETTER DAYS.

TRANSPORTATION BAY.
DID YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT SHIELD AGENT?
WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE?
THE ODDS ARE GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME.
ONCE WE HOTWIRE ONE OF THESE SPEEDERS WE'VE GOT OUR TICKET OUT OF HERE.
BUT THE GUARDS--
TAKEN CARE OF WITH ONE THORNY ILLUSION--
--THAT OUGHTTA CONFUSE THOSE NEANDERTHALS LONG ENOUGH.
HURRY.
HOPE THIS KEYCARD I NICKED FROM THE MEDTECH I HYPO'D WORKS. *
* LAST ISSUE.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU KNEW HOW TO DRIVE ONE OF THESE THINGS.
I'VE PLAYED THE ROADKILL ARCADE SIM A MILLION TIMES--
--GUESS THESE THINGS HANDLE A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY IN REAL LIFE!
VVVRRRR
OOOP

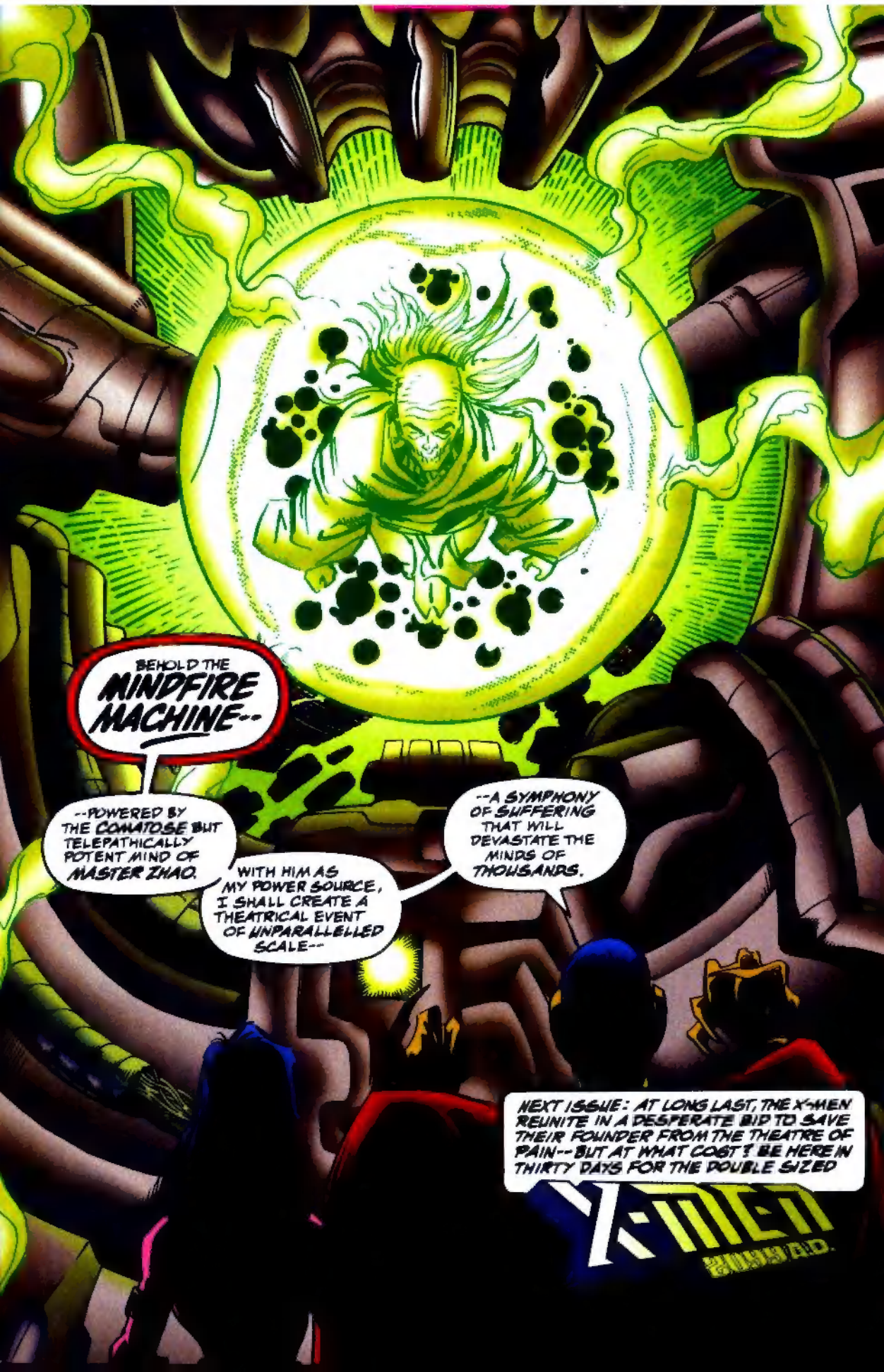
NOT BAD FOR A NOVICE, HUH, QUIV--
AND LOOK AHEAD-- THERE'S OUR EXIT.
HOOOGA!
HOLD ON, QUIV--
THIS IS GONNA BE TIGHT...
BLOODY SHOCK, THEY'VE SOUNDED AN ALARM!
THEY'RE CLOSING THE BAY DOORS--
I CAN'T LOOK...
THIS NEVER HAPPENS IN THE ARCA--
KKRASH

TAKE COVER, ROSA!
PING
PING
PING
PING
PING
I THOUGHT THOSE THINGS WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO FALL OUT OF THE SKY.
THEY AREN'T. THE WAKANDAN TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THEM'S PRACTICALLY INFALLIBLE.
DO YOU THINK THE PLATFORM WAS SABOTAGED?
TO WHAT END?
ONE OF THE E.M.P.'S * EXPLODED!
TO GET YOUR ATTENTION! YOU METALLIC MORON!
* ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE PLATFORM.
GLITTERSPIKE?!?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE STRANDED IN THE UNDERGROUND CAVES AFTER YOU TRIED TO KIDNAP ROSA. *
THAT ALIEN YOU LEFT ME WITH COST ME MY ARM!
IF I HADN'T INADVERTENTLY FOUND A SHAFT OF LIGHT THAT RESTORED MY PHOTOVOLTAIC POWER--
--I'D BE DEAD BY NOW.
BUT YOU AREN'T THAT LUCKY.
* X-MEN 2099 #15.

THE SIERRAS.
SLOW DOWN, HENRI--I'M PUSHING THIS CAT-GOOO TO ITS LIMIT.
CAN'T HELP IT, KRYS. DON'T WANT TO BE LATE FOR OUR MEETING.
OUR FRIEND ISN'T THE MOST PATIENT MAN.
WHY SOMEONE WHO CAN MOVE AT NEAR MACH SPEED WOULD EVER WORRY ABOUT BEING L--
RRRUUMMBLL
ANOTHER AFTERSHOCK!!!
THE BRIDGE IS COLLAPSING BENEATH US--
SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLEAR IT WITH AN EXTRA PUSH--
FLOOR IT, KRYS!
MADE IT! WHEW! THAT WAS TOO CLOSE F--
KRYS!
HENRIIIII--

CANYON FLOORS A THOUSAND FEET STRAIGHT DOWN--
NO WAY HENRI CAN NAVIGATE A VERTICAL DROP TO SAVE ME.
GUESS ALL I CAN DO IS CLOSE MY EYES AND WAIT FOR IMPA--
HUH?
SKEE RUNCH!
SKOOSHAWK!
BOY, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GOOD YOU LOOK TO ME RIGHT NOW.
WHEN WE LAND I'M GOING TO KISS THAT BIG RED MUG OF YOURS.
THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY, KRYSTALIN.
YOU HAVE COME TO MY AID IN THE PAST, BOTH IN LAS VEGAS AND IN THE DARKROOM*--
I AM SIMPLY RETURNING THE FAVOR.
*X-MEN 2099 #1 AND #4 RESPECTIVELY.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE.
WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE, XI'AN?
AM I SUPPOSED TO BE AWED AND OVERWHELMED BY ALL THIS BIO-LAB HARDWARE?
THE THEATRE IS NO MERE ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATE, SHAKTI--
--THEIR RESOURCES ARE GREATER THAN SOME NATIONS.
LOOK AT WHAT THEY'VE DONE WITH THE GENETICALLY DETERIORATING CHOSEN.
THE CRYOGENICALLY SUSPENDED BODIES YOU STOLE FROM MY LAB IN NEW MEXICO.*
YOU'RE JEALOUS THAT THE THEATRE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DO WHAT YOU COULD NOT...
...HEAL THEIR ROTTING FLESH AND REVIVE THEM IN A WEEK'S TIME.
*X-MEN 2099 #18.
YOU'RE RISKING THEIR LIVES WITH THAT KIND OF GENETIC ACCELERATION.
THIS IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF INHUMANE RESEARCH YOU FORMED THE X-MEN TO STOP.
THE X-MEN WAS A FOOL'S DREAM.
NO, YOU'RE WRONG.
THE MASK, THE ROBES, AND ALL THIS THEATRICAL FLOURISH ARE ONLY CLOUDING YOUR BETTER JUDGMENT...
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU REALIZE THAT--


BEHOLD THE MINDFIRE MACHINE--
--POWERED BY THE COMATOSE BUT TELEPATHICALLY POTENT MIND OF MASTER ZHAO.
WITH HIM AS MY POWER SOURCE, I SHALL CREATE A THEATRICAL EVENT OF UNPARALLELED SCALE--
--A SYMPHONY OF SUFFERING THAT WILL DEVASTATE THE MINDS OF THOUSANDS.
NEXT ISSUE: AT LONG LAST, THE X-MEN REUNITE IN A DESPERATE BID TO SAVE THEIR FOUNDER FROM THE THEATRE OF PAIN--BUT AT WHAT COST? BE HERE IN THIRTY DAYS FOR THE DOUBLE SIZED
X-MEN
2099 A.D.